

# Summaries

## **Citizen Participation in the Health Sector in Rural Bangladesh: Perceptions and Reality**

Simeen Mahmud

Citizen engagement with institutions and policy processes gives shape and content to the meaning of citizenship by placing obligation on both citizens and state, and helps to ground the abstract relationship between state and citizen within the consciousness of people. Participation meets the concern not only for citizen 'voice' but also for citizen agency. This article explores people's perceptions and reality about participation in newly opened spaces within the Bangladesh public health care delivery system. The empirical findings suggest that the effectiveness and ability of community groups to function as spaces for participation and provide the means for developing capabilities to participate is limited, being constrained by poverty, social inequality and dependency relationships, invisibility, low self-esteem and absence of political clout. Neither have these groups been able to foster a sense of community, since perceptions of rich–poor differences in capabilities and responsibility remain strong.

## **Citizenship, Community Participation and Social Change: The Case of Area Coordinating Teams in Cape Town, South Africa**

John J. Williams

The South African post-apartheid government has made a number of laws since 1994 that make it possible for ordinary people to play a meaningful role in the affairs of local authorities. Local authorities are, for example, obliged to consult citizens with regard to Integrated Development Planning at grassroots level. Towards this end, the City of Cape Town established Areas Coordinating Teams (ACTs) in 1999 in several townships with a view to empowering historically marginalised and excluded communities. This article investigates whether or not ACTs are an effective medium to represent the voices of ordinary people in matters of local governance. It concludes that community

participation, as in ACTs, appears to be functionally truncated, institutionally manipulated and are thus structurally limiting. This means that ACTs merely serve to ratify rather than influence/change official behaviour and that communities are only consulted as long as they support the goals of particular officials or politicians.

## **Institutional Dynamics and Participatory Spaces: The Making and Unmaking of Participation in Local Forest Management in India**

Ranjita Mohanty

Recent times witness many new ways through which people's engagement is sought by the state. Amongst them, the creation of local institutions for representation, deliberation, and decision making at the village level is perhaps the most important. Seldom existing in isolation, these local developmental institutions intersect, interact and, at times, overlap with other local institutions. What shape participation eventually takes within these developmental spaces is thus contingent not only on the dynamics taking place within them, but also to a large extent on their relationship with coexisting local institutional spaces. This article explores the institutional dynamics within and between local institutions for forest management in the hilly villages of Uttranchal in northern India. Creating and institutionalising spaces such as these, the article argues, provide necessary, but not sufficient conditions to ensure the democratisation of participation. These institutional spaces have the potential to create certain conditions for participation and democracy at the local level, but they can also restrict such possibilities and therefore, must not be conflated either with participation or with democracy.

## **Brazil's Health Councils: The Challenge of Building Participatory Political Institutions**

Vera Schattan P. Coelho

This article examines the experience of municipal and district health councils in the city of São Paulo

in the light of the literature on citizen participation in Brazil. This literature has attributed the success or failure of participatory mechanisms either to the degree of civil society involvement or to the level of commitment to such mechanisms on the part of the political authorities. This begs the question of what happens where both factors are present but the participatory mechanisms nevertheless remain relatively ineffectual as institutions for promoting the interests of the excluded. Drawing on research into participation in São Paulo's health councils, the article argues that the success of this type of participatory mechanism depends not only on the involvement and commitment of civil society and state actors, but also on their willingness and ability to promote institutional innovations that guarantee clear rules of political representation, and processes of discussion and decision making that lead to effective participation by representatives who command less technical knowledge and fewer communicative resources.

### **Civil Society Representation in the Participatory Budget and Deliberative Councils of São Paulo, Brazil**

Arnab Acharya, Adrián Gurza Lavallo and Peter P. Houtzager

We examine the differential capacity of civil society organisations to represent the poor in institutional spaces for citizen participation in the city of São Paulo, Brazil. The data was produced by a unique survey of civil society actors who work for, or with, sectors of the lower-middle class, the working class, and the urban poor. Contrary to the focus on *autonomy* in much of the work on civil society, we find support for the claim that collective actors with relations to institutional actors, and the Workers' Party and State actors in particular, have the highest propensity to participate. We also find support for the idea that the institutional design of participatory policy-making spaces has a significant impact on who participates, and that this impact varies by type of civil society actor. We therefore suggest a *polity perspective* on civil society organisations that, unlike the more common civil society perspective, is sensitive to the differential capacity for action and to institutional effects.

### **The Dynamics of Public Hearings for Environmental Licensing: The case of the São Paulo Ring Road**

Angela Alonso and Valeriano Costa

This article investigates an environmental governance mechanism in Brazil: the Public Hearings for Environmental Licensing (Aplas). Through a case study – a ring road currently under construction around the São Paulo Metropolitan Area – we evaluate the effectiveness of this mechanism that seeks to expand popular participation in the public discussion of enterprises with potential environmental risk. Analysing the social profile and the cognitive and material resources of the Aplas' potential participants as well as Aplas *modus operandis*, we argue that Aplas present the same problems pointed out by the literature on the functioning of deliberative processes: the most active agents are pre-established elites; authorities have agenda control; Aplas have low influence on environmental public policies. Hence, we conclude that Aplas lack of legitimacy and efficacy, not being able to ensure the effective participation of ordinary citizens in the environmental licensing process.

### **Power, Participation and Political Renewal: Issues from a Study of Public Participation in Two English Cities**

Marian Barnes, Helen Sullivan, Andrew Knops and Janet Newman

This article describes and discusses the findings of recent research into public participation at in two contrasting English cities in order to reflect on the capacity of new opportunities for participation to contribute to democratic renewal. Our research revealed the rich diversity of sites and practices within the field of public participation. By exploring participation from the perspectives of both citizens and officials, and studying the process of deliberation, we highlighted participation as a dynamic and interactive process and generated insights into: the ways in which notions of 'the public' are constructed, how competing claims to legitimacy are negotiated, how questions of difference and diversity are managed in both the establishment of formal access rules and in the interactions within forums themselves, the interaction between representative and participative democracy in the public policy field, and how the

tensions between representative and participative democracy are reconciled – or not – within forums themselves.

### **A Sea-change or a Swamp? New Spaces for Voluntary Sector Engagement in Governance in the UK**

Marilyn Taylor, with Gary Craig, Surya Monro, Tessa Parkes, Diane Warburton and Mick Wilkinson

In recent years, the emphasis of the New Labour government on partnership and civil renewal has opened up new governance spaces in the UK. These spaces have provided new opportunities for voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) but also posed new dilemmas. This article draws on research into the role of these organisations in the policy process, exploring how open the new spaces are, who is engaged in them and what scope for influence they offer. It concludes that, while there is room for optimism, operating in these new spaces can be risky and challenging. It welcomes the growing dialogue between North and South and the resource that this offers for negotiating the challenges they pose.

### **Social Strategies and Public Policies in an Indigenous Zone in Chiapas, Mexico**

Carlos Cortez Ruiz

This article examines emerging forms of participation in a variety of spaces in Chiapas, in the south of Mexico, situated within a complex socio-political context. A range of different relations between marginalised groups, social movements, and the government are articulated through experiences of participation both in created and invited spaces. The Zapatista movement has fostered changes in relationships between marginalised groups, including indigenous people and women, and the state – particularly the national government and regional development programmes created during the last several years. These regional programmes represent the national government's position on important issues, including the nature of socio-economic regional development, indigenous people's rights, and the protection of environmentally sensitive areas. Differences and commonalities in participation in spaces created by the Zapatista movement in autonomous municipalities, versus

participation in formalised spaces within the government's regional development programmes provide some important insights about the role of participation in bringing about change.

### **AIDS Activism and Globalisation from Below: Occupying New Spaces of Citizenship in Post-apartheid South Africa**

Steven Robins and Bettina von Lieres

This article explores the organisational practices and strategies of the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), an AIDS activist social movement in South Africa. TAC, like other new social movements, draws on grassroots, bottom-up, network-based modes of organisation that operate simultaneously in diverse local, national and global spaces. The article argues that TAC provides examples of organisational practices that cut across institutional and non-institutional spaces, and that are capable of generating multiple relations to the state. In doing so, it has provided its members with opportunities to engage simultaneously in a variety of participatory spaces that allow for the articulation of new forms of *citizenship from below*.

### **Increasing Space and Influence through Community Organising and Citizen Monitoring: Experiences from the USA**

Andy Mott

In the United States, politics is heavily dominated by the large middle class and strong economic interests. As a relatively small minority, poor people thus face particular challenges in influencing important policy decisions. They have neither the numbers nor the wealth to have easy access to decision makers, and there is little officially sanctioned “space” and opportunity for them to have an influence. Poor people in the USA must therefore be highly organised and active to have any influence on the issues which matter most. They must build powerful mass-based organisations to represent their interests, and become highly creative in developing sophisticated strategies to maximise their influence. They must take full advantage of the political space which is open to them (“*their space*”) and work to expand it. They must also create new space of their own (“*our space*”) where they can organise people and build organisations which increase their power, capacity, sophistication and influence.